

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 12591

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, TH

SUBJ: DUSIT THANI HOTEL STRIKE ENDS

REF: A. BANGKOK 11190

B. BANGKOK 11931

1. ONCE AGAIN BANGKOK NEWSPAPERS HEADLINED THE SETTLEMENT OF THE TWO-MONTH OLD DUSIT THANI HOTEL STRIKE. DETAILS OF THE SETTLEMENT INDICATE ALMOST COMPLETE CAPITULATION BY THE STRIKERS.

THE KEY ISSUE, THE REHIRING OF 115 WORKERS DISMISSED AS TROUBLEMAKERS, WAS RESOLVED WHEN MANAGEMENT AGREED TO PAY "WELFARE MONEY" TOTALING 800,000 BAHT TO THE DISMISSED WORKERS. WORKERS WANTING TO RETURN TO WORK SIGNED A SEPARATE AGREEMENT STATING THEY WILL ACCEPT PRE-STRIKE WAGE RATES.

2. WHEN STRIKING WORKERS INDICATED THEY PLANNED TO PRESENT THEIR DEMANDS TO THE KING, LABOR DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS SCRAMBLED TO WORK OUT A SETTLEMENT TO PRESERVE THE KING'S TRADITIONAL APOLITICAL ROLE.

3. MANAGEMENT MAINTAINED UNTIL THE END THAT THE STRIKE WAS NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE LABOR RELATIONS ACT AND THEREFORE REFUSED TO NEGOTIATE OR SIGN AN AGREEMENT WITH
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THE STRIKERS. THE TWO AGREEMENTS THAT WERE SIGNED WERE WORKED

OUT BETWEEN THE LABOR DEPARTMENT AND THE STRIKERS WITH THE INFORMAL BLESSING OF THE DUSIT THANI MANAGEMENT. IN A FURTHER DISPLAY OF CONTEMPT TOWARD THE STRIKERS, MANAGEMENT IS REPORTED AS SAYING THEY INTEND TO IMPOSE THEIR OWN TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT ONCE THE CONTRACT SIGNED AT THE END OF THE FIRST DUSIT THANI STRIKE EXPIRES THIS SEPTEMBER.

4. DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE LABOR DEPARTMENT WICHIT SAENGTHONG LABELED THE PAYMENTS TO THE DISMISSED WORKERS "WELFARE MONEY PAID FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS." HE POINTED OUT THAT EVEN THOUGH THE AMOUNTS TO BE PAID EQUAL THE AMOUNTS DUE UNDER THE SEVERANCE PAY PROVISIONS OF THE LABOR LAW THE PAYMENTS CANNOT BE CONSIDERED SEVERANCE PAY SINCE THAT WOULD IMPLY THE HOTEL VIOLATED THE LAW.

COMMENT: THE STRIKERS' PLAN TO PETITION THE KING POINTS OUT THEIR LACK OF FAITH IN EXISTING LABOR DISPUTE SETTLEMENT MECHANISMS AND THE NEED FOR THE LABOR COURTS THE RTG HAS ANNOUNCED BUT THUS FAR NOT ESTABLISHED. MANAGEMENT'S BEHAVIOR HAS REAFFIRMED LABOR'S VIEW OF THE HOTEL AS A SYMBOL OF EXPLOITATION AND MAY HAVE SOWN THE SEEDS FOR FUTURE PROBLEMS. THE LEADERS OF THE HOTEL AND HOSTEL WORKERS ASSOCIATION CAN NOW SET ABOUT REBUILDING ITS SHATTERED LEADERSHIP AND RESTORING ITS POSITION IN THE DUSIT THANI HOTEL IN ANTICIPATION OF THE NEXT ROUND, LIKELY TO BEGIN WHEN THE 1974 AGREEMENT EXPIRES IN SEPTEMBER.

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